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A Letter from the Publisher

The trench coat is the unofficial uniform of two professions: foreign correspondent and intelligence agent. TIME National Security Correspondent Bruce van Voorst, who reported on this week's cover stories about the Marine spy scandal and the state of high-tech surveillance, knows intimately the wardrobe of both jobs. In 1955, fresh out of the University of Michigan with a master's degree in Soviet studies, Van Voorst mulled over offers from the State Department and the CIA. The lure of the trench coat won out.

Even though he was hired as a political analyst, Van Voorst, like all other new CIA officers, took a course in basic intelligence gathering. One final exam called for surreptitiously opening a series of sealed envelopes, each inside the one before, and removing a note from the last envelope before resealing the lot. "I successfully extracted my message," says Van Voorst, "but students who used steam were dismayed, because the envelopes had been treated with a purple dye that reacted to the heat."

After several years he left the agency to become a foreign correspondent in Europe and Latin America. On the diplomatic trail from 1973 to 1976, he traveled 380,000 miles with the peripatetic Henry Kissinger. Van Voorst was rudely reminded of his former world of intrigue in 1979, shortly after he joined TIME,



Van Voorst at Iwo Jima Memorial, near Washington

when he covered the Ayatollah Khomeini's rise to power. He found himself under surveillance from mysterious cars parked outside TIME's Tehran office, and was visited by agents who ransacked the bureau.

Van Voorst finds covering defense and intelligence little different from other beats, "except that you need lots of quarters to call sources from pay phones." Says Van Voorst: "Intelligence is now a profession like any other. It is taught on university campuses and has its own association of retirees, which holds regular meetings, just like the Rotary Club." He must occasionally ask himself if publication of what he has discovered will harm the national interest.

"I have no desire to expose intelligence secrets merely for a scoop," he says. "But I am enthusiastic about baring things that bureaucrats are hiding to protect their own bungling. I have been digging a long time for details about the construction fiasco of the new embassies in Moscow and Washington." Though Van Voorst's involvement in espionage is decades behind him, he still maintains an extensive library of books on spying. And, of course, he still wears a trench coat.

